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ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COVID-19 AND  
EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION IN LUXURY HOTELS

By

Renee Bawcom

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
Graduation with Honors from the  
South Carolina Honors College

May, 2021

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## **Thesis Summary**

This paper investigates the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and employee satisfaction in luxury hotels. Through a review of the existing body of scholarly literature about factors affecting employee satisfaction, and new collection and analysis of data on the topic, the identification and evolution of factors affecting employee satisfaction was explored. In reference to companies' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, luxury hotel employees' levels of satisfaction were analyzed. The analysis concluded that the widespread changes made to the luxury hotel industry in response to the COVID-19 pandemic did not have a negative impact on employee satisfaction.

## **Introduction**

The novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which causes the disease known as COVID-19, has generated significant consequences affecting almost all aspects of life around the globe as a result of its rapid spread, including severely impacted the global economy throughout its many industries. One of the most negatively affected industries is the hospitality industry, as numerous government entities have taken actions to slow the spread of the virus, thereby restricting activities such as travel, gatherings, and many leisure activities. The pandemic has caused extensive economic damage to hotel industry as a whole, exemplified by occupancy rates of United States hotels plunging at the start of the pandemic down to 24.5% in April 2020 (STR Global, 2020), as well as warnings from the World Travel and Tourism Council that over 50 million jobs in the global hospitality industry could be in jeopardy (Manjula Bai, H., 2020). The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) concluded that hotel room revenue fell to almost 50% of pre-COVID levels, generating only \$84.6 billion during the entirety of 2020. Additionally, annual occupancy for the United States dropped to about 44% for the year

compared to 2019's 66%, and the total number of rooms occupied decreased by 458 million from 2019 levels (AHLA, 2021). To demonstrate perspective on the impact that the pandemic has had, the impact of COVID-19 on the travel industry thus far has been nine times greater than the impact of 9/11 on the industry (AHLA, 2021). As a result of the extreme economic impact of COVID-19 on the hotel industry, many hotels and companies have been forced to greatly reduce their operations, furlough or terminate their employees, or completely close their hotels permanently or for an indefinite period of time.

Employee satisfaction is a topic of importance to be examined within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of the vast changes to employees' roles and responsibility due to companies' responses to the pandemic. The global health crisis forced companies to quickly create response plans with little guidance as a result of the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, therefore affecting previously identified factors that influence employee satisfaction. Additionally, previously less relevant factors became prevalent due to the nature of the pandemic; for example, the topics of job insecurity, unemployment, and health risks were identified as the most serious consequences of the pandemic on the global level (Godinic et al., 2020). Furthermore, previously nonexistent factors such as the risk of exposure to COVID-19 have the potential to affect employee satisfaction; the second highest-risk occupation after healthcare practitioners for risk of exposure and contracting the disease was identified as positions in the tourism and hospitality sector (Chinazzi et al., 2020). As a result of the very current issue of COVID-19's effect on the hotel industry and the unprecedented actions taken by hotels to deal with this crisis, there is very little information about employee satisfaction regarding the hotel industry's response to COVID-19.

Investigating the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on employee satisfaction in luxury

hotels is warranted as employee satisfaction influences hotel performance. An understanding of the factors influencing employee satisfaction during the pandemic can guide employers to potential solutions to increase employee satisfaction and therefore hotel performance. This study investigates the level of employee satisfaction in the luxury hotel industry specifically surrounding the hotel industry's response to the coronavirus pandemic. The basis of knowledge created by a literature review is utilized to identify key factors that influence employee satisfaction and the foundational idea that employee satisfaction influences hotel performance. Quantitative and qualitative data has been collected through surveys and interviews from a variety of employees in the luxury hotel industry. This data analyzed the employees' level of satisfaction with the actions taken by their employer in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and identify key factors influencing employee satisfaction that are specific to the situation created by the pandemic.

## **Literature Review**

### **Limitations of Existing Body of Literature**

The existing body of scholarly literature on this topic mainly consists of studies focused on specific subsections, such a similar grouping of factors or a single factor's influence on employee satisfaction or external job satisfaction factors, rather than broader, more comprehensive examination of the topic. Another challenge in reviewing this topic arose as a result of the existing body of literature focusing on employee satisfaction across the industry, rather than studies specific to the luxury hotel industry. A limited number of studies have been conducted and published since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic regarding hotel performance, employee and job satisfaction, and other elements within the context of the pandemic; the insight provided from these studies will be utilized to inform and contextualize the

research conducted in this study (Wong et al., 2020; Bajrami, 2020; Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2020; Vo-Thanh et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, this literature review examines the existing studies related to the topic of employee satisfaction in the hotel industry and within luxury hotels, as well as identifies the key factors that influence employee satisfaction in luxury hotels from the existing body of scholarly literature.

### **The State of Human Resources in the Hotel Industry Prior to COVID-19**

In the decade directly prior to the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the hotel industry experienced tremendous growth that has led to increased competitiveness as well as a rise in guest expectations in regard to every aspect of their stay. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the hotel industry in the United States employed 2.3 million employees, equating to one in twenty-five American jobs, and involved 8.3 million hotel-supported jobs in total. The industry in the United States was comprised of 56,000 hotels, averaged 66% hotel occupancy, and sold 1.3 billion rooms in 2019. The 5.3 million guest rooms created \$163 billion and \$168 billion in annual room revenue in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Finally, the hotel industry supported communities, cities, and states with state and local tax revenue totaling \$41.1 billion in 2019 and supplied \$660 billion to the U.S. GDP (American Hotel & Lodging Association, 2021).

Hotels struggled to differentiate themselves as industry competitiveness increased; one of the most influential ways that a hotel can differentiate their property and offerings is to provide luxury level service as an encompassing experience that involves both the physical and social surroundings in the environment created by the hotel (Walls et al., 2011). The maintenance of this level of service faces many obstacles, as employee satisfaction largely influences the provision of this level of service. Hotels are able to provide higher quality service when employee satisfaction is higher because employees are more willing to surpass difficulties in

order to assist the guests and they are more invested in their position; as a result, employee satisfaction is a topic of the utmost importance in regard to hotel performance and guest satisfaction.

A 2014 examination of 70 known studies on luxury hotels over the past two decades found that human resources (HR) was one of the four main dominating topics within luxury hotel research and would continue to increase in the future (Chu, 2014). The study cited globalization and franchising of luxury hotel brands for the increase in studies on this topic of HR in luxury hotels, necessitating adjustments to current HR management strategies to adapt to different cultures in the process of globalization (Chu, 2014). Seventeen of the known 70 studies were identified as relating to human resources within luxury hotels; many of these studies focused on the subjects of employee loyalty and turnover, employee empowerment, and strategic human resources management (Chu, 2014). Additionally, Chu, Tang, and Lou's (2016) study found that the number of research articles focused on luxury hotels increased dramatically after 2005, signifying a rise in interest and subsequent research on this topic (p. 157). These findings assert the position that the topic of employee satisfaction, which involves and directly relates to the subjects of employee loyalty, turnover, and empowerment, has been and will continue to be a topic of importance when studying human resources in luxury hotels. A further need for continued research on the topic of employee satisfaction in luxury hotels arises when considering that these studies were conducted and analyzed before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The topic warrants continued research as a result of the drastically different global context of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the global context surrounding previously published studies.

### **Luxury Hotels**

It is important to define what makes a hotel a luxury hotel when examining key factors



affecting employee satisfaction specifically within luxury hotels. Many guests associate luxury as an experience rather than a product, but Barbara Talbott, a former Chief Marketing Officer of the Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, provides more specific characteristics. Talbott asserts that four key factors of style, comfort, service, and pampering contribute to the luxury hotel experience, and any hotel meeting requirements of the four key factors, regardless of whether it is part of a chain, independent, rated, or non-rated, is to be considered a luxury hotel (Talbott, 2004). Chu's review of twenty years of studies on luxury hotels remarks on how the luxury hotel industry has evolved as a manner by which travelers can live out their dreams or fantasies of other lifestyles, and as a result, why the luxury hotel industry focuses efforts so intensely on the guest experience and guest satisfaction. As a result, the differentiation of a luxury hotel from an upscale, mid-level, or economy hotel can be simplified to the idea that luxury is more of an experience than a product (Chu, 2014).

In addition, many luxury hotels are also associated with rating systems such as Forbes Travel Guide or AAA Travel Guide; the designation as a Forbes Four- or Five-Star hotel, or as a Four- or Five-Star Diamond hotel, typically signifies a recognized luxury status. This study utilizes these methods of categorization when defining a hotel as a luxury hotel regarding discussing the luxury hotel industry as well as categorizing hotels as luxury hotels in the context of the research conducted for this study.

Hotels face many tangible and intangible challenges when implementing, providing, and maintaining luxury level service for guests. Forbes Travel Guide has over 900 standards used when evaluating a hotel for its Five-Star award, including both physical, tangible standards for the hotel as well as intangible, experience-related standards. Initial challenges include the monetary investment to acquire the facilities, furnishings, and required physical items needed to

fulfill requirements such as 24-hour room service and exceptional high-quality beds. In addition, many ongoing difficulties arise from the intangible standards, such as high standards for employee-guest interactions. Forbes expects intuitive, thoughtful, and anticipatory service from employees, particularly those interacting with guests. Many of the challenges to providing luxury level service with these intangible elements arise from staffing; employees must be well trained, dedicated to the provision of that level of service, and show genuine care and concern for guests (Kester, 2021). Recruitment and retention of employee talent poses a large challenge for many luxury hotels in maintaining consistency in their product of the luxury hotel experience.

### **Employee Satisfaction in Luxury Hotels**

Examining the effects of both high and low employee satisfaction in luxury hotels provides the basis of understanding as to why it is important to identify key factors that affect employee satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined as the “pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values” (Locke, 1969, p. 316). Job performance is defined as employees’ performed activities and behaviors that contribute to an organization’s goals, including the delivery of tangible services (ex., hotel check-in and check-out) and intangible services (ex., guest relations) (Jeong & Lam, 2016). Individuals that enjoy higher employee satisfaction are more engaged in their work and dedicated to their job, and as a result, the more likely they are to provide higher quality service and personalization.

Many case studies about the hotel industry focus on struggling hotels that exhibit the negative effects of low employee satisfaction, which were detrimental to the success of the hotels and resorts examined in the case studies. For example, Clarke, Robinson, and Mayo’s (2018) case study describes the four-star Hotel Paradise in Ocho Rios in Jamaica. Employee satisfaction

within the housekeeping department of the hotel had plummeted, demonstrated by the lack of motivation and low employee morale. As a result, guests were frequently disappointed when faced with a lower standard of service than portrayed through international hotel advertisements. This case study demonstrates the direct relationship between employee satisfaction and hotel performance. The dissatisfaction of employees in the housekeeping department caused physical effects of inadequate completion of employees' duties and emotional effects on the entirety of the employees in the department. Although this case study only demonstrates the particular effects of low employee satisfaction that affected a single luxury hotel, it illustrates the potential effects of decreased employee satisfaction that many other luxury hotels may experience.

A study of job satisfaction of employees of five-star hotels in South Africa asserted that “employee satisfaction can result in guest satisfaction and in order for five-star hotel employees to render a world-class experience, the provision of decent work and job satisfaction of these employees is of great importance” (Coughlan et al., 2014, p. 97). Additionally, a study that surveyed 266 participants of a training program organized by the Association of Employers in Croatian Hospitality utilized qualitative research methods to identify factors related to employee satisfaction and hospitality that support positive behavior in hospitality organizations. This conclusion further supports the theory that employee satisfaction is positively linked to employee performance and therefore hotel performance, namely that a “higher level of employee satisfaction leads to a higher level of all types of positive behavior inside the organization” (Laškarin Ažić, 2017, p. 105). The findings of these studies support the importance of investigating employee satisfaction in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Factors Affecting Employee Satisfaction**

As a result of lack of studies particularly focused on employee satisfaction in luxury

hotels, it is appropriate to include studies that are more generalized to the hotel industry as a whole. For example, the previously mentioned study of over 200 Croatian hospitality employees also concluded that “there is a direct relationship between employee satisfaction with coworkers’ relationships and job satisfaction,” which identifies coworkers’ relationships and job satisfaction to be two key factors affecting employee satisfaction (Laškarin Ažić, 2017, p. 114). This research demonstrates the importance of employee satisfaction on organization performance within hotels in the hospitality industry and the industry scope of the importance of employee satisfaction as a factor that is key to the realization of the organization’s goals.

Book, Gatling, and Kim’s (2019) research investigated the relationship between leader satisfaction, which contributes to employee satisfaction, and the outcomes of employee engagement, loyalty, and intention to stay; their research determined that “leadership satisfaction is a critical antecedent to engagement” (Book et al., 2019, p. 368-369) and also that “that leadership satisfaction has a direct effect on employee engagement, loyalty, and intention to stay” (Book et al., 2019, 385). Engagement, loyalty, and intention to stay are all indicators of the employee’s satisfaction and therefore the study determines that leadership satisfaction is a key factor in employee satisfaction.

Santercole’s (1993) study of four hotel properties, each representing a specific market segment of the hotel industry, found that there are differing perceptions of satisfaction between managers and employees, which leads to differing levels of employee satisfaction. Santercole’s findings about the differences between managers and employees is important to consider when surveying employee satisfaction, as managers typically have more insight into, control over, and communication about farther-reaching decisions that affect lower-level employees, therefore creating a disjointed level of understanding. This study identified factors that influence

employees' quality of work life rather than employee satisfaction but should still be considered as it demonstrates that the perceptions of employee satisfaction can vary from the different viewpoints of managers and employees.

These findings are still applicable to examining the topic in luxury hotels because many of the studies include data from a range of different hotels, therefore including luxury hotels. Despite this, it should be considered that the key factors identified from this literature review of the topic in regard to the hotel industry in general may be slightly different or affect employees in a different manner when considered these key factors in regard to solely luxury hotels.

### **External Factors in Luxury Hotels**

When reviewing the existing body of literature on this topic, it became clear that many studies focused on specific topics within employee satisfaction in luxury hotels; for example, external and internal factors that affect employee satisfaction in luxury hotels were studied in different research projects. Coughlan, Moolman, and Haarhoff's (2014) study of 124 employees from four five-star hotels in the Western Cape of South Africa utilized a literature review and quantitative data from an empirical study to identify the external job satisfaction factors that influence overall job satisfaction of employees in selected five-star hotels located along the Western Cape of South Africa. This study defined external job satisfaction as "satisfaction relating to the work environment of employees," and results identified supervision, work environment, and work itself as key external job satisfaction factors that play into overall job satisfaction (Coughlan et al., 2014, p. 97). An understanding of external factors that influence employee satisfaction is important as a result of the potential to create changes in the external work environment of employees; identification and quantification of these factors allows employers to make adjustments that can result in an increased level of employee satisfaction.

## **Internal Factors in Luxury Hotels**

Research that identifies internal factors, elements that are unique to each employee as a result of their personality and life situation, is unique to the specific research situation as a result of the highly specialized nature of identifying internal factors. Despite this challenge, there are some studies that work to identify these internal factors and are applicable outside the specific research context. For example, Hekman and Lashley's (2018) study of the motivational factors of 39 employees from a luxury five-star hotel in Italy found variations in "the job factors that are most important to employees in different age, gender and department groupings" (p. 120). Motivational factors and the fulfillment of those factors greatly influence employee satisfaction, and the study determined that "appreciation for a job well done was the most important motivational factor, whereas the opportunity for advancement was ranked as least important," although the variation in the importance of these factors across different age, gender, and departments must also be considered (Hekman & Lashley, 2018, p. 115).

Another study that demonstrates the same concept of differing motivational factors of employees in different age groups can be found in the previously mentioned study by Book, Gatling, and Kim (2019), which also asserts that "engagement has a stronger effect on older employees' loyalty, which is a key driver of their intention to stay, whereas engagement has a significant direct effect on only younger employees' intention to stay" (p. 385). This study demonstrates that engagement directly affects both older and younger employees' satisfaction, as seen through older and younger employees' intention to stay and also older employees' loyalty.

## **Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a rapidly changing and unstable work environment for hotel industry employees. A 2020 study surveyed 758 hotel employees in the United States

regarding the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on hotel employees' perceptions of three main groups of occupational stressors (Wong et al., 2020). These three stressors were traditional hotel-work stressors, unstable and more demanding hotel-work-environment stressors, and unethical hotel-labor-practices-borne stressors. Previous studies not conducted during an unprecedented economic recession identified that occupational stressors negatively affect employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. In contrast, this study indicated that hotel employees who had high perceived levels of traditional hotel-work stressors still experienced positive job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The single factor of traditional hotel-work stressors includes a framework of six elements, including conflict with home life, difficult tasks and unsatisfactory pay, conflicts arising from job responsibility, unfair treatment, a lack of support, and the organizational culture (Wong et al., 2020). The study identified potential explanations for this change, namely the psychological reaction to the global economic crisis causing employees to have an acceptance of traditional hotel-work stressors as a result of remaining employed and having the opportunity to earn a living during a time of extremely high unemployment and instability (Wong et al., 2020). In the context of examining the effect of COVID-19 on employee satisfaction, this study indicates that the effect of traditional hotel-work stressors has shifted from negatively impacting employee satisfaction to positively impacting employee satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Effects of Job Insecurity**

The global economic crisis caused by COVID-19 has caused extreme levels of unemployment and greatly increased job insecurity. Previous studies concluded that high levels of job insecurity negatively impacted job satisfaction among hotel employees, indicating that job insecurity is a factor in employee satisfaction. In an effort to examine this relationship in the

context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a study surveyed 624 hospitality employees from Serbia with the aim to identify how the effects of COVID-19, categorized as job insecurity, risk-taking behavior at the workplace (employees' exposure to dangerous materials, equipment, or other inadequate working conditions), and changes in the organization affect job motivation and job satisfaction (Bajrami, 2020). The study concluded that job insecurity, changes in the organization, and risk-taking behavior are all predictors of negative outcomes of job motivation and job satisfaction (Bajrami, 2020). Although this research is generalized to the overall hospitality industry, it is still important to consider job insecurity, changes to the organization, and risk-taking behavior related to the COVID-19 exposure potential as a result of working in the hospitality industry as factors influencing employee satisfaction in the hotel industry.

Yet another study conducted in 2020 points to the factor of job insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting different elements of hotel industry employees; researchers from multiple universities from the United Kingdom and Spain collectively surveyed 353 employees of hotels in the Canary Islands of Spain to examine the effects of job insecurity on hotel employees' anxiety and depression, and whether these heightened psychological strains influence employees' self-rated task performance. The results concluded that job insecurity had a significant effect on employees' anxiety and depression, although their task performance was not affected by the mental health elements or job insecurity (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021). The findings connected the external factor of job insecurity to the internal factor of an employee's mental health; within the context the pandemic, increased anxiety about work and overall depression can have a dramatic impact on an employee's satisfaction at their workplace.

In another study, researchers aimed to determine the relationship between employees' satisfaction with organization COVID-19 responses in lowering perceived job insecurity and



maintaining job performance. Utilizing survey responses from 374 Vietnamese full-time hotel employees, the study concluded that there is a positive influence of employee satisfaction with organization COVID-19 responses to job performance (Vo-Thanh et al., 2020). A hotel organization's COVID-19 responses, such as provision of personal protective equipment (PPE), adherence to applicable government guidelines, and reduction of exposure risk for employees, and employees' satisfaction with these efforts is positively associated with job performance. These results indicate that another factor in employee satisfaction in the context of COVID-19 can be found in organization COVID-19 responses.

Finally, a study specifically related to the effect of job insecurity on employees in luxury hotels was conducted, surveying 314 employees of eight different five-star hotels in Seoul, South Korea. Relating back to the effect of employee satisfaction on hotel performance, the study utilized the concept that high job engagement corresponds to having a positive mental state on the job. As a result, employees with high job engagement can be particularly important to performance by improving organization effectiveness, creating more productive work environments, and decreasing employee turnover. Findings demonstrated that job insecurity had negative effects on the engagement of luxury hotel employees (Jung et al., 2021), furthering the importance of job insecurity as a factor that influences employee satisfaction and engagement.

### **Research Purpose**

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and managerial-level employee satisfaction in luxury hotels. This relationship was studied through the identification of internal and external factors through a literature review of the existing body of literature on the topic and related topics. Additionally, interview questions and a survey were developed to investigate the quantitative levels of managerial-level employee

satisfaction in luxury hotels within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview and survey were designed to collect data pertaining to the relationship between the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and factors affecting managerial-level employee satisfaction in luxury hotels. Furthermore, the study determined the factors with which higher and lower levels of employee satisfaction are associated. Widespread effects of the pandemic on the hotel industry as a whole, such as extremely high rates of job loss, lost room revenue, and low occupancy rates suggested a generally negative employee satisfaction perspective, but this theory was not supported by the findings of this study.

## **Methodology**

### **Interview and Survey Design**

Based on the research questions and the internal and external factors affecting employee satisfaction as identified by the literature review, interview questions were designed to gain insight into employees' perspectives about the different factors that affect employee satisfaction within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The internal and external factors identified by the literature review include leadership satisfaction, supervision, the work itself an employee completes, job insecurity, risk taking behavior, and changes made to the organization. Nine questions were created to prompt the participant to speak about their experience as an employee of a luxury hotel during the COVID-19 pandemic related to the factors of leadership satisfaction, supervision, work itself, job insecurity, risk taking behavior as, and changes to the organization. Questions were reviewed by another faculty member familiar with luxury resorts, and proposed changes were implemented to alter the phrasing of some questions or specify the topics addressed by the questions. The table below directly relates the factors affecting employee satisfaction to the interview questions created to pertain to and ask the employee about those

factors during the interview.

*Table 1: Interview Questions and Related Employee Satisfaction Factors*

<b>Factor Affecting Employee Satisfaction</b>	<b>Pertaining Interview Questions</b>
Leadership Satisfaction	#5: Can you identify any differences in the information you have received from the company-wide response to COVID-19 compared to the information you have received from your direct supervisor?
Supervision	#3: Please tell me what type of resources your employer provided to assist you in their response to COVID-19.
Work Itself	#2: What changes have been made specifically to your work or role due to COVID-19?  #4: How have the changes to your work due to the COVID-19 response impacted your satisfaction as an employee?
Job Insecurity	#6: Were you furloughed from your position? If so, what impact did this action have?  #7: If you were not furloughed, did you take a pay cut? If so, what impact did this action have?
Risk Taking Behavior	#3: Please tell me what type of resources your employer provided to assist you in their response to COVID-19.
Changes to the Organization	#1: In general, please tell me about what you know of how your company responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.  #4: How have the changes to your work due to the COVID-19 response impacted your satisfaction as an employee?  #8: What would help improve employee satisfaction as your employer resumes operations?

The second element was the use of a survey questionnaire to obtain quantitative data in response to questions related to the topic as well as complete a general job satisfaction survey. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) Short Form was utilized as part of the survey instrument. The MSQ measures job satisfaction by asking respondents to express their level of satisfaction on specific job aspects on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being not satisfied to

5 extremely satisfied. The MSQ has two elements, intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic satisfaction, and is a widely used and reliable scale that has been utilized in the hospitality industry by other researchers (Weiss et al., 1967). For example, Coughlan et al. (2014) study referenced in the literature review also utilized the MSQ to measure job satisfaction.

A separate scale of 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree was provided for the participant to answer in response a single question about agreement with the statement that their employer's actions specifically taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic impact their satisfaction with their work. This question was designed to address an element not found in the MSQ or a specific factor identified by the literature review; instead, this was a broader question designed to ask how impacted the employee was by the changes implemented only as a result of the pandemic.

Eight additional items were added in a separate section of the survey to inquire about factors influencing employee satisfaction that were identified through the literature review in the specific context of the COVID-19 pandemic. These items were designed to measure employee satisfaction similar to the style of the MSQ where participants selected a numerical value corresponding to negative or positive satisfaction. These items asked about factors identified by the literature review but additionally items specific to the context of the pandemic, including satisfaction with the actions taken by the employer to resume operations and actions taken to adapt to long term changes due to the pandemic.

*Table 2: Survey Questions and Related Employee Satisfaction Factors*

<b>Factor Affecting Employee Satisfaction</b>	<b>Pertaining Survey Questions</b>
Supervision	#3: The assistance my immediate supervisor provided in response to COVID-19

	#4: The level to which I feel as if I was respected during my employer's response to COVID-19  #5: The level to which I feel as if I was cared for during my employer's response to COVID-19
Job Insecurity	#4: The level to which I feel as if I was respected during my employer's response to COVID-19  #5: The level to which I feel as if I was cared for during my employer's response to COVID-19
Risk Taking Behavior (related to Personal Protective Equipment, Safety, and Security)	#4: The level to which I feel as if I was respected during my employer's response to COVID-19
Changes to Organization	#2: My employer's response to COVID-19  #6: The level of satisfaction with the actions my employer is taking to resume operations after closures due to COVID-19  #7: The level of satisfaction with the actions my employer has taken to adapt to long term changes due to COVID-19

### Data Collection

The sample size of the data was 11 responses that completed both the interview as well as the survey questionnaire. Data was collected between July 2020 to November 2020. After initial contact with participants via email communications, interviews were conducted over telephone calls. The audio of the interviews was recorded to utilize for data analysis. Participants were given a disclaimer that any identifying details and personal information would be kept confidential. Interview questions were read word for word during the phone interview, and the interviewee answered the questions to their desired level of specificity and detail. The survey questionnaire was sent to participants directly after their interview concluded, and participants returned their completed survey within twenty-four hours after their interview via electronic scan or photograph of the survey. Participants were not compensated for their time or participation.

All research was conducted in correspondence with the Collaborative Institute Training Initiative (CITI) after successful completion of the Human Research: Social and Behavior Researchers course. This ensured privacy and confidentiality of participants and their responses, as well as compliance with ethical and scientific research principles pertaining to research on human subjects.

### **Data Analysis**

Survey results were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet to analyze the quantitative data. The mean and standard deviation for the responses to each question were calculated. Transcriptions of the interviews were created utilizing the audio recordings of the interviews. Transcriptions were typed and uploaded to the Dedoose software. Dedoose software was utilized to code the transcriptions into categories and subcategories based on the subject matter or theme that the interviewee was speaking about during their interview. The themes and subthemes used to code each transcription are as follows.

*Table 3: Coding Themes and Subthemes and Related Employee Satisfaction Factors*

<b>Codes: Themes and Subthemes</b>	<b>Pertaining Factor Affecting Employee Satisfaction</b>
Operational Changes due to COVID-19 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</li> <li>2. Housekeeping and Cleaning Procedures</li> <li>3. Government Guidelines</li> <li>4. Security</li> <li>5. Signage</li> </ol>	Changes to the Organization  Risk Taking Behavior
Company Assistance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use of Sick Leave</li> <li>2. Use of Vacation Leave</li> <li>3. Insurance Benefits and Use</li> <li>4. Employee Assistance and Support</li> </ol>	Leadership Satisfaction
Changes to Role <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overwork</li> <li>2. Working Remotely</li> </ol>	Work Itself

Communication 1. Effective Communication 2. Lack of Communication	Leadership Satisfaction  Supervision
Changes to Pay 1. Furlough 2. Pay Cuts	Job Insecurity
Overall Company Response	Changes to the Organization
Employee Satisfaction Remarks 1. Negative Satisfaction 2. Positive Satisfaction	Employee Satisfaction (employee perspective in general on employee satisfaction)
Guest Satisfaction Comments	No pertaining factor, but as identified in the literature review, employee satisfaction and guest satisfaction are interconnected
Potential Solutions Comments	No pertaining factor, but provides perspective on potential solutions

## Results

### Quantitative Results

Participants were eleven full-time employees of luxury hotels in the United States who had been employed at their current hotel for at least one year prior to the time at which they were interviewed. Participants ranged from 26 years of age to above 66 years old, with 36.36% in the range from 26 to 35 years old. The majority of participants (72.72%) were female. Six participants were managers, four participants were department heads, and one participant was a supervisor. None of the entry level employees out of the potential participants responded to the request to participate. Seven participants had the highest level of education of a bachelor's degree, while two had associate degrees, one had a master's degree, and one had the highest level of education of high school. The participants were part of a variety of departments; five were in Sales, four in Human Resources, one in Food and Beverage, and one was a General Manager and did not fit within any of the departments. The average number of years in the hospitality industry for participants was 17.64 years, and the average years of employment at

their current hotel was 5.70 years. The following table concludes the demographic information of participants and employers' hotels.

*Table 4: Demographic Information*

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Role</b>		
Manager	6	54.55
Department Head	4	36.36
Supervisor	1	9.09
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full Time	11	100.00
<b>Furloughed</b>		
Yes (Average number of weeks furloughed = 15.5)	4	36.36
No	7	63.64
<b>Department</b>		
Sales	5	45.45
Human Resources	4	36.36
Food & Beverage	1	9.09
General Manager	1	9.09
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	8	72.72
Male	3	27.28
<b>Age</b>		
26-35 years	4	36.36
36-45 years	2	18.18
46-55 years	3	27.27
56-65 years	1	9.09
Above 66 years	1	9.09
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>		
High School	1	9.09
Associate's	2	18.18
Bachelor's	7	63.64
Master's	1	9.09
Average Years of Experience in Hospitality Industry	17.64	
Average Years of Employment at Current Hotel	5.70	



Hotel	Number of Rooms	Forbes Rating (out of 5 Stars)	AAA Rating (out of 5 Diamonds)	Hotel Rating (out of 5.0)	Number of Reviews Determining Rating
<i>A</i>	175	5 Star	5 Diamond	4.5	1,272
<i>B</i>	700	None	3 Diamond	4.0	1,818
<i>C</i>	184	None	3 Diamond	4.5	785
<i>D</i>	373	4 Star	4 Diamond	4.5	2,537
<i>E</i>	146	Recommended	5 Diamond	4.5	796
<i>F</i>	60	4 Star	4 Diamond	5.0	755

### Quantitative Survey Results

The overall level of employee satisfaction had a mean of 4.00 out of 5.00 and a standard deviation of 0.63, which indicates a relatively high level of overall employee satisfaction by all participants. None of the responses to the questions created specifically for this survey averaged to less than a 4.00 out of 5.00. None of the survey responses to the MSQ had a mean of less than 3.00, which was defined as neutral on the Likert scale provided by the MSQ Guide. The overall high level of employee satisfaction was unexpected in light of the general negative sentiments of the industry surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Table 4 below contains entirety of the quantitative results obtained from the survey.

*Table 5: Quantitative Results from Survey*

Survey Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
Rate on the scale the level to which you agree with the statement below: My employer's actions specifically taken in response to COVID-19 impacts my satisfaction with my work (strongly disagree 1 through 7 strongly agree)	4.09	0.94
1. My overall level of employee satisfaction	4.00	0.63
2. My employer's response to COVID-19	4.09	0.83
3. My employer's response to COVID-19	4.27	0.79
4. The level to which I feel as if I was respected during my employer's response to COVID-19	4.09	0.70
5. The level to which I feel as if I was cared for during my employer's response to COVID-19	4.00	1.00

6. The level of satisfaction with the actions my employer is taking to resume operations after closures due to COVID-19	4.27	0.65
7. The level of satisfaction with the actions my employer has taken to adapt to long term changes due to COVID-19	4.00	1.10
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire Questions:		
1. Being able to be busy all the time	4.27	0.65
2. The chance to work alone on the job	4.27	0.47
3. The chance to do different things from time to time	4.18	0.98
4. The chance to be “somebody” in the community	3.91	0.83
5. The way my boss handles his/her workers	4.09	1.04
6. The competence of my supervisor in making decisions	4.18	0.98
7. Being able to do things that don’t go against my conscience	4.36	0.67
8. The way my job provides for steady employment	3.82	1.17
9. The chance to do things for other people	4.18	0.75
10. The chance to tell people what to do	3.36	0.81
11. The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities	4.27	0.79
12. The way company policies are put into practice	3.73	1.01
13. My pay and the amount of work I do	4.09	0.94
14. The chance for advancement on this job	3.73	1.01
15. The freedom to use my own judgement	4.09	1.04
16. The chance to try my own methods of doing the job	4.27	1.01
17. The working conditions	4.27	0.79
18. The way my co-workers get along with each other	4.00	1.00
19. The praise I get for doing a good job	3.73	0.79
20. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job	4.18	0.87

The individual question in the survey regarding the participant’s agreement with the statement that their employer’s actions specifically taken in response to COVID-19 impacts their satisfaction with their work had a mean of 4.09 out of 7.00 and a standard deviation of 0.94. This mean value indicates that the average participant agrees slightly above a neutral stance that their employer’s actions taken in response to COVID-19 does impact their satisfaction with their work. Implications of this value support the overall concept that actions taken by the employer in response to COVID-19 do impact an employee’s satisfaction.

The other two questions that averaged to a 4.00 were regarding the level to which employees felt as if they were cared for in the employer’s response to COVID-19, and the level

of satisfaction with the actions their employer has taken to adapt to long term changes due to COVID-19 with standard deviations of 1.00 and 1.10, respectively. As a result of none of these seven items averaging to less than a 4.00, the overall level of satisfaction indicated was high, but the satisfaction regarding these two items were slightly lower.

Some of the lower numerical value responses were in relation to satisfaction in the way their job provides for steady employment, the way company policies are put into practice, the chance for advancement in their job, and the praise they receive for doing a good job. The lowest numerical mean was satisfaction related to the chance to tell people what to do with an average of 3.34 with a standard deviation of 0.81; this response was surprising considering that all participants were supervisors, managers, or department heads, which typically entails supervision and telling employees they are supervising what to do. A potential explanation could be link to a type of powerlessness as a result of the pandemic and a loss of control over their decision-making power as managers.

The single highest numerical response corresponding with the highest satisfaction was with being able to do things that don't go against the employee's conscience with a mean of 4.36 with a standard deviation of 0.67. This relates to the factor of work itself on employee satisfaction, as participants indicated a high level of satisfaction as a result of completing work that does not contradict their own moral codes.

## Qualitative Results

*Table 6: Frequency of Coded Statements*

<b>Codes: Themes and Subthemes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of Theme Total (%)</b>
Operational Changes due to COVID-19	Total: 67	
1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	General: 21	18.82
2. Housekeeping and Cleaning Procedures	1. 16	

3. Government Guidelines 4. Security 5. Signage	2. 6 3. 18 4. 3 5. 3	
Company Assistance 1. Use of Sick Leave 2. Use of Vacation Leave 3. Insurance Benefits and Use 4. Employee Assistance and Support	Total: 45 General: 16 1. 4 2. 4 3. 17 4. 4	12.64
Changes to Role 1. Overwork 2. Working Remotely	Total: 40 General: 22 1. 7 2. 11	11.24
Communication 1. Effective Communication 2. Lack of Communication	Total: 52 1. 37 2. 15	14.61
Changes to Pay 1. Furlough 2. Pay Cuts	Total: 48 1. 25 2. 23	13.48
Employee Satisfaction Remarks 1. Negative Satisfaction 2. Positive Satisfaction	Total: 52 General: 9 1. 22 2. 29	14.61
Overall Company Response	23	6.46
Potential Solutions Comments	22	6.18
Guest Satisfaction Comments	7	1.97

Interview responses were coded into nine main themes identified as the primary topics discussed by participants during their interviews. Some of the themes that arose most frequently during interviews were different than the factors affecting employee satisfaction that were identified by the literature review. The most prominent theme of coded excerpts was in reference to operational changes due to COVID-19, encompassing 18.82% of total coded excerpts. Subthemes include changes made due to government guidelines, personal protective equipment (PPE), housekeeping and cleaning procedures, security of and within the hotel, and signage.

Many participants remarked on the most visible changes including frequent temperature-taking, constant mask-wearing, and social distancing.

The theme of company assistance for the employee accounted for 12.64% of coded excerpts. Subthemes consisted of use of sick leave, insurance benefits, employee assistance and support, and use of vacation leave. The theme encompassed supported provided by the employer for the employee that was implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Remarks about this theme typically focused on gratitude for the employers' decisions to allow employees to utilize benefits such as available sick leave and vacation leave. In addition, two employees specifically mentioned the continued provision of insurance benefits for the employee during their furloughs. Employee assistance included employers' provision of an employee assistance fund for those in need, care of employees' emotional wellbeing programs, and Human Resources hotlines.

Changes to an employee's role consists of 11.24% of total coded excerpts. This theme included changes to an employee's typical responsibilities and job duties, instances of working more or overwork, and changes to working remotely instead of in-person. As managerial-level employees, many participants remarked on how employees they previously supervised were still furloughed or had been laid off. As a result, they were completing more work and tasks previously completed by their employees for typically the same or less pay, leading to feelings of being overworked. The hospitality industry typically lends itself to working from the physical location of the employer as a result of interactions with guests and closer communication with other departments. Six participants mentioned working from home themselves, representing a change from their typical work setup. These participants mentioned the challenges associated

with this change, with one statement addressing previously nonexistent difficulties, as “working from home and taking care of the baby at the same time was very hard on [them].”

The theme of communication comprised of 14.61% of total excerpts. The COVID-19 pandemic affected both how employers communicated with employees as well as the unprecedented content of communications regarding the unfamiliar situation facing the hotel industry. Rather than communicating with employees in person, furloughed employees received communication through phone calls, audio and visual call systems such as Zoom, and emails. The sheer volume of changes made to the hotel industry in the relatively short amount of time created a breakdown of communication for many participants. However, one exception arose from participants who worked in Human Resources. These participants remarked that much of their hotel’s own communication came from the HR department, and therefore felt as if there were less communication breakdowns, whereas managerial-level employees of other departments had more remarks about the overall lack of communication. One instance in which employees of almost all departments mentioned a lack of communication was in regard to communication while furloughed.

Excerpts related to the theme of changes to pay consisted of 13.48% of total coded excerpts, including both subtheme of furloughs and pay cuts. The majority of participants (63.63%) took a pay cut from their normal salary, less than half were furloughed (36.36%), and only three participants were both furloughed and took a pay cut (27.27%). Despite enduring impactful financial changes as a result of the pandemic, employee satisfaction was still relatively high. One consideration is that as a result of the participants being managerial-level employees, normal pay is higher than entry-level employees. In addition, all participants still had a job at the time of their interview. This suggests that changes to pay, even temporary furloughs, do not have

a significant impact on employee satisfaction if the affected employee was still able to return to their job. However, one effect not examined by this study that affects overall quality of life is the effect of a furlough or pay cut on an employee's ability to pay for typical expenses. Changes to pay is closely related to the factor of job insecurity. One participant remarked that "as people started to be called back to work, and I wasn't, definitely my anxiety level went up, especially when I didn't hear from the company and I knew other people were being called back to work." This statement relates to both lack of communication and job insecurity, which in turn affected the participant's satisfaction with their employer.

General remarks about employee satisfaction, both positive and negative, made up 14.61% of total coded excerpts. This theme included unexpected, intangible elements, including a sense of personal negative-trending employee satisfaction, and in contrast, remarks about general positivity and positive-trending employee satisfaction when referring to the entirety of their employer's employees. One participant stated that "hospitality people are wired to make the best of a situation, we are service-oriented, so we are used to being uncomfortable, we're used to giving, we're used to sacrificing ourselves to make someone else happier of their day brighter. It is part of our DNA." This statement conveys the general sentiment that over half of the participants referenced, in even if decisions or situations were difficult, everyone was doing the best they could. Many of the statements related to the theme of negative employee satisfaction related to personal perspectives or situations, as well as in reference to the time period in which they or their employees were furloughed. When asked about the impact of being furloughed, one individual remarked that "it was nice to take maybe the first month off and reenergize [themselves] and not have any responsibilities for a little bit. After that, it definitely took a toll

on me because just the uncertainty and the unknown of everything was really a struggle mentally.”

Coded excerpts about overall company responses accounted for 6.46% of total excerpts. The main component of this theme was the primary consideration of the safety of guests and employees in employers’ responses, and as a result, the initial closure of the majority of employers’ hotels. The average hotel closure mentioned by participants was about five months between March and August of 2020. As a result of participants being comprised of managerial-level employees, many had insight into the decisions made by their employer when responding initially to the pandemic. One asserted that “the safety of the guests and employees was of the upmost concern to [their] company, not necessarily revenue or generating room nights or anything along those lines.” Overall company response excerpts provided affirmation that, of the employers’ hotels included in the sample, broad changes were made in response to the pandemic, mainly hotel closures or drastic reductions in hotel operations.

Comments regarding potential solutions to improving employee satisfaction consisted of 6.18% of total coded excerpts. One remark that stood out was regarding a missed opportunity to praise those who stayed and worked during the period in which the majority of employees were furloughed. In addition, this participant insisted that they were deserving of recognition because “they were staying and working harder, while we were all out on furlough, they were making less money because of the (pay) reduction and... quite honestly, they could have been making more money staying at home than they were making while they were working because of the additional government stimulus.” A consensus arose surrounding the acknowledgement of sacrifices made by employees; “we don’t hear enough of it, of just what we are doing and the sacrifices we are making,” and “there needs to be that acknowledgement that it is hard for



everybody and we are all in this together.” The specific consensus found in the majority of coded excerpts for this theme creates a strong argument surrounding the benefits of creating an employee appreciation and recognition program, both within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Guest satisfaction themed excerpts accounted for the smallest percentage of total excerpts with 1.97%. The focus of remarks about guest satisfaction has been on employers’ focus to put guests’ safety and wellbeing at the forefront of their decisions, and in turn, create positive guest satisfaction during the difficult context of COVID-19. Employers faced a difficult decision regarding liability for guests’ health and safety when providing hospitality services during the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant stated that “the feedback we get back from the guests say that they feel very safe, and they feel very comfortable coming into our hotel, and our guest satisfaction survey comes back 90% that guests say that they fully understand the safety precautions we are taking in the hotel.” Although this is positive guest satisfaction feedback with luxury hotel operations during the pandemic, it is very specific to an individual hotel’s situation and response to the pandemic.

The quantitative results of the survey taken by the 11 participants yielded higher numerical values for the mean of each response, therefore indicating positive-trending employee satisfaction. When considering the quantitative results of the survey in light of some of the negative-trending topics, examples, and perspectives brought up by participants in their interviews, the high levels of satisfaction indicated by the survey was contradictory to the expected results. Potential reasonings could be related back to a previous study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic; as investigated by Wong et al study conducted in 2020, hotel employees who experienced high perceived levels of traditional hotel-work stressors still

demonstrated positive job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Wong et al., 2020). Specifically considering this relationship in light that all participants were managerial-level employees, it is plausible that despite the negative-trending sentiments found in the overall industry, those who still had jobs at the time of participation had a more positive employee satisfaction perspective.

### **Conclusion**

This study worked to analyze the relationship between employee satisfaction in luxury hotels and the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus. A literature review of the existing body of scholarly literature on related topics was conducted. The state of the hotel industry prior to COVID-19 was reviewed, as well as literature that informed the categorization of a hotel as a luxury hotel. The general topic of employee satisfaction in luxury hotels was explored, as well as previously conducted studies that identified both internal and external factors affecting employee satisfaction. Finally, factors affecting employee satisfaction specifically related to the event of the COVID-19 pandemic and not previously identified by studies conducted prior to the pandemic were investigated through the literature review.

Additionally, interview questions and a survey questionnaire were developed to investigate the current state of managerial-level employee satisfaction in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews and surveys were completed with a sample of managerial-level employees of luxury hotels, and the data was analyzed. Quantitative results from the survey support positive-trending high levels of employee satisfaction. No survey question had an average of less than neutral, or 3.00 out of 5.00 on a Likert scale. Quantitative results from interviews provided insight into employees' perceptions about their employee satisfaction as an employee of a luxury hotel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Transcription excerpts were coded

into nine main themes comprised of related subthemes, and identified potential factors affecting employee satisfaction not previously identified by the literature review.

The factor of communication was not identified by the literature review as an external factor affecting employee satisfaction; numerous remarks made by participants during interview point towards communication as a factor that arose in significance to employee satisfaction specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, the excerpt theme of changes to pay relates to the factor of job insecurity, including subthemes of furloughs and pay cuts; participant remarks further support the conclusion made by previous studies and identified during the literature review of job insecurity as a factor affecting employee satisfaction. Data collected during this study provided in-depth insight into managerial-level employees' perceptions of employee satisfaction and factors that influence their employee satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Practical Recommendations**

This research can be utilized by companies and managers to reflect upon the identified factors that impact employee satisfaction and make changes to their organization response to the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that have the potential to increase employee satisfaction. Practical recommendations beyond the context of the COVID-19 pandemic include the consideration of the external factors affecting employee satisfaction and making corresponding changes to improve overall employee satisfaction. For example, communication comprised of a large portion of total coded excerpts. Many participants' negative remarks about lack of communication reflected on the sense of uncertainty created by little to no communication and a feeling of disconnect from their employer. Frequent, clear, and open communication regarding pertinent matters on both the employee's department and hotel operations as a whole creates the

opportunity to feel connected and informed. One option is the implementation of a daily newsletter delivered to the employee's inbox with the day's events, weather, important updates, and more.

The prominent theme of operational changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic included many remarks from employees on bolstered housekeeping and cleaning procedures, the use of personal protective equipment, and increased security, along with other subthemes. Many participants were marked on feeling safe and cared for as a result of their employers' high level of response to the invisible threat of the virus. Continued implementation of these cleaner, safer practices or variations of them allow for the potential to employers to demonstrate their care for their employees and represent an overall higher level of guest and employee safety that has the potential to continue long after COVID-19 is no longer a prominent threat to public health. This study revealed aspects and themes that managerial-level employees felt affected them both positively and negatively. The results can help inform decisions regarding these factors in the future to reduce the impact of negative elements and focus on increasing potentially positive elements.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study are mainly based on the small scale and scope of the research. The sample size was relatively small and included managers, department heads, and supervisors. Santercole's 1993 study found that there were differences between perceptions about levels of employee satisfaction between managers and employees. The findings of this study would reasonably be shifted towards a more negative employee satisfaction perspective than the actual results if the study included entry level employees as participants. This would be as a result of managerial-level employees having more insight and direct communication about changes to

hotel operations, decisions affecting employees and their jobs, and overall knowledge of the hotel's situation within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Entry level employees generally lack this insight and ability to change the factors that influence employee satisfaction in comparison to decision-making parties such as managers, and as a result, have lower levels of employee satisfaction. In addition, entry level employees are more likely to suffer from furloughs, lay-offs, or drastic pay cuts than managerial-level employees. The factor of pay and more extreme financial effects as a result of the pandemic would reasonably have a larger impact on employee satisfaction for the lower-level employees that bore the majority of the impact of financial changes to their pay (Wong et al., 2021). The limitations of this study regarding the factor of pay involve the focus on managerial employees; the large majority of the participants were able to keep their jobs, even if they endured a pay cut, compared to the industry-wide trend of many entry level and lower-level employees being furloughed indefinitely or losing their job permanently.

Another limitation is the continuously developing situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous elements affected by the pandemic have continued to change, such as government responses, guidelines, and restrictions, increased comfortability over time with risks associated with the pandemic, and companies' responses and operational changes. As the pandemic has continued, there have been waves of higher rates of infection and corresponding levels of government restrictions and guidelines. In the hospitality industry, these guidelines or company-specific decisions generally affect capacity in hotels and restaurants, and as a result, sometimes changes to the number of employees or amount of work. Additionally, the general public's level of comfortability with the pandemic and risks associated with pandemic, mainly the risk of infection, have changed to become less concerning as more time has passed. These

factors limit the reliability of the results as the data was collected over a time period of almost four months, therefore including a variety of different perspectives over a long timeframe.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

One of the most important elements to be addressed in future studies that has influenced the data is the limited sample size. A larger and more diverse sample size would yield more insightful data that would be more representative of employees of the luxury hotel industry as a whole. Specifically, participants who agreed to participate in the interview and survey process only included managers, department heads, and supervisors. The inclusion of entry level employees would greatly increase the probable relevancy of the data to the totality of employees in the luxury hotel industry.

Another recommendation would be to collect data during a much shorter time frame, such as two weeks. This shorter time frame would lend itself to a much smaller potential for shifting public perceptions, large changes in government guidelines, and general changes to the situation surrounding the pandemic. Many elements of the pandemic changed during the time frame of data collection from July to November 2020, and as a result, different participants had more or less information provided by the scientific community, government guidelines, and effects of the pandemic on the luxury hotel industry in which they work.

Santercole's 1993 study determined that there are differing perceptions of satisfaction between managers and employees, which indicates differing levels of employee satisfaction. This concept should be explored in relation to this specific topic regarding employee satisfaction in luxury hotels to further confirm Santercole's findings by investigating the quantitative differences in employee satisfaction between entry level and managerial level employees. A

further development could also be the investigation of the differences between mid-level and upper-level managers.

Broader applications of the methods utilized in this study could be applied to different segments of the hotel industry as well as other segments of the hospitality industry as a whole. Only luxury segment hotels were examined in this study, but there are potential findings and differences in other segments of the hotel industry such as economy, mid-price, boutique, resort, and more. Other hospitality industry segments include food and beverage, events, tourism, travel, and recreation. Similar studies on other segments of the hospitality industry could identify differences in how the COVID-19 pandemic affected employee satisfaction depending on the industry segment.

Finally, geographical differences could affect findings on the topic depending on local legislation and guidelines, governmental support during the pandemic, the state of the local economy, the composition of the local economy, and many other factors. Similar studies conducted in different or individual states of the United States or different countries could identify if variations exist between different geographic locations.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A. Questionnaire taken by interviewees.

**Please answer the following questions. All answers are highly confidential.**

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**I am:** Department Head ☐ Manager ☐ Supervisor ☐ Entry Level Employee ☐

**Which best describes your employment status?**

Full Time ☐ Part Time ☐ Full Time Seasonal ☐ Part Time Seasonal ☐

**Were you furloughed from your position due to COVID-19?** Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how many weeks? \_\_\_\_\_

**I work in:** Housekeeping ☐ Food&Beverage ☐ Engineering ☐ Front Office ☐  
Human Resources ☐ Security ☐ Sales ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**I am:** Female ☐ Male ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

**My age is:** 18-25 years ☐ 26-35 years ☐ 36-45 years ☐  
46-55 years ☐ 56-65 years ☐ Above 66 years ☐

**My highest level of education is:**

High School ☐ Technical Certificate ☐ Associate's Degree ☐  
Bachelor's Degree ☐ Master's Degree ☐

**Years of Experience in the Hospitality Industry:** \_\_\_\_ **Years of Employment at this Hotel:** \_\_\_\_

**Please rate on the scale the level to which you agree to the statement below:**

**My employer's actions specifically taken in response to COVID-19 impacts my satisfaction with my work**

Strongly Disagree    **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**    Strong Agree

### On my present job, this is how I feel about...

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
1. My overall level of employee satisfaction					
2. My employer's response to COVID-19					
3. The assistance my immediate supervisor provided in response to COVID-19					
4. The level to which I feel as if I was respected during my employer's response to COVID-19					
5. The level to which I feel as if I was cared for during my employer's response to COVID-19					
6. The level of satisfaction with the actions my employer is taking to resume operations after closures due to COVID-19					
7. The level of satisfaction with the actions my employer has taken to adapt to long term changes due to COVID-19					

**Decide how satisfied you feel about the aspect of your job described by the statement. Check the box that most directly corresponds with your satisfaction level.**

**On my present job, this is how I feel about...**

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
1. Being able to be busy all the time					
2. The chance to work alone on the job					
3. The chance to do different things from time to time					
4. The chance to be "somebody" in the community					
5. The way my boss handles his/her workers					
6. The competence of my supervisor in making decisions					
7. Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience					
8. The way my job provides for steady employment					
9. The chance to do things for other people					
10. The chance to tell people what to do					
11. The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities					
12. The way company policies are put into practice					
13. My pay and the amount of work I do					
14. The chance for advancement on this job					
15. The freedom to use my own judgement					
16. The chance to try my own methods of doing the job					
17. The working conditions					
18. The way my co-workers get along with each other					
19. The praise I get for doing a good job					
20. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job					

## Appendix B. Interview questions asked to interviewees.

Your privacy is ensured, and no information will be shared. Data will be stored in a secure and confidential manner. Please do not use names of people or the name of your employer in answering questions, and instead focus on the information and experience.

I will begin recording now and conclude the recording at the end of the phone call. Please answer the questions with as much detail as you are comfortable to provide.

### Questions:

1. In general, please tell me about what you know of how your company responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. What changes have been made specifically to your work or role due to COVID-19?
3. Please tell me what type of resources your employer provided to assist you in their response to COVID-19.
4. How have the changes to your work due to the COVID-19 response impacted your satisfaction as an employee?
5. Can you identify any differences in the information you have received from the company-wide response to COVID-19 compared to the information you have received from your direct supervisor?
6. Were you furloughed from your position? If so, what impact did this action have?
7. If you were not furloughed, did you take a pay cut? If so, what impact did this action have?
8. What would help improve employee satisfaction as your employer resumes operations?
9. Is there anything else you wanted to tell me about this topic?